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The Ghost Room from Super Scary Stories for Sleepovers © Lowell House 1995

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FREE IN
ISSUE 3
More Spooky
Snaps!



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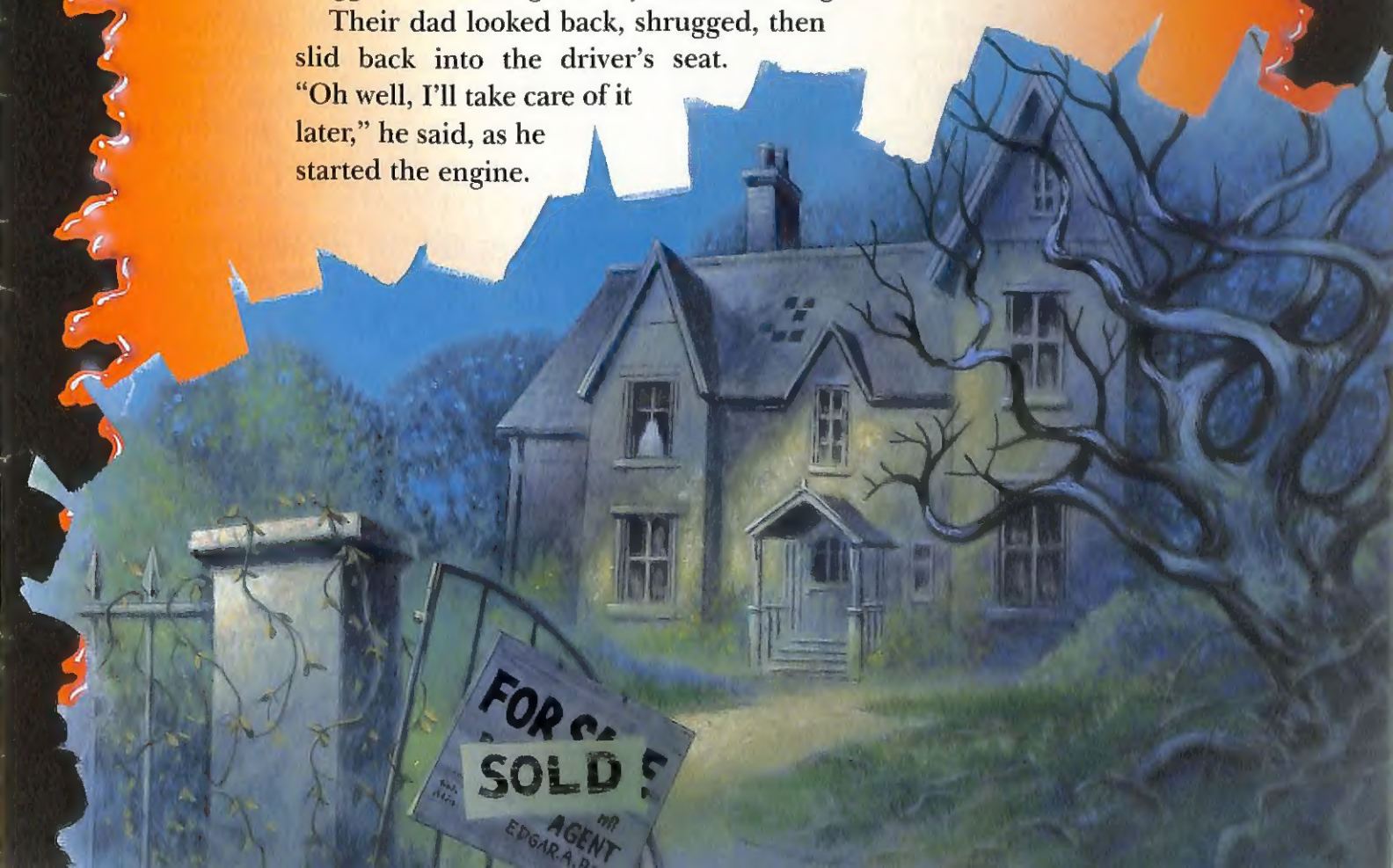
BRENDA'S MUM shook her head and pointed out of the car window. "Will you look at that?" Brenda saw that her mum was indicating the weather-worn sign on the gate at the end of the overgrown drive, which was hanging at a crazy angle. Her dad pulled the family car into the driveway and slowed to a stop.

"The removal men must have run into it," he speculated as he opened his car door, stepped out and walked over for a better look. Grabbing the sign with both hands, he pulled it into its proper position, then headed back to the car.

"Check it out, Dad!" Brenda's eight-year-old brother, Ted, sniggered as the sign slowly keeled over again.

Their dad looked back, shrugged, then slid back into the driver's seat.

"Oh well, I'll take care of it later," he said, as he started the engine.





"We have plenty to do already if we're going to change this place into our home."

Brenda turned her attention to the old house at the end of the driveway. Even though the summer morning was clear and sunny, the two-storey house looked dreary, as if a cloud hung over it. Something about the place definitely made her feel uneasy. The once white walls had greyed with age, and a few slates were missing from the roof, but that wasn't all. No, the old house had an eerie feeling about it, so much so that Brenda actually shivered slightly as her dad pulled the family car up in front of the door.

"It may not look too great yet, but we'll whip it into shape," her mum said brightly, helping Brenda's four-year-old sister, Tina, out of her seat belt. "They just don't have houses like this back in Manchester – not ones that we can afford, anyway." She smiled. "You kids are going to be surprised to see how big it is inside."



Their dad pushed open the car door and got out. He fumbled with the keys, then unlocked the front door. "Our new home," he said, pushing it open with a flourish.

Brenda's footsteps echoed on the hard wood floor as she stepped inside. She was surprised at the size of the hall that led into the huge main room. "Wow, this is great!" she said, impressed. "Are the bedrooms upstairs?" Then she glanced sideways at her brother and added, "I get first

pick since I'm the oldest in the family."

Ted started to protest, but their dad cut him off. "That sounds fair to me," he said.

"Cool!" Brenda exclaimed as she worked her way round the stacks of packing cases to a staircase that rose along the wall to the right of the front door. "I'm going to pick out my room right now!"

Gripping the smooth, curved banister, Brenda counted the stairs one by one as she went. At the twenty-second step, she found herself in a long hallway with several doors on either side, all open except for the one at the end.

Making her way down the hall, she stopped and stared at the closed door. A weird feeling passed over her and she felt drawn to the room. She swayed slightly as if she might lose her balance.

"Whoa!" she said aloud, thinking that perhaps she had run up the stairs a little too quickly.

The uncomfortable feeling passed. Brenda turned and went back down the hall to inspect each room – until she found herself back at the closed door. A strange notion flicked through her mind. "I know this room," she thought, "I've been here before."

She reached for the door knob and turned it. "That's crazy," she mumbled under her breath, "I've never been to this part of the country before."

The door opened with a light click and swung silently inward. Brenda carefully studied the room. Larger than any of the others, except the one her mum and dad had chosen, it was painted a pale blue and had two large, wooden-framed windows that looked down on to the back garden.

"All right, this looks cool," Brenda said and moved to step inside. But all at once



the muscles in her stomach inexplicably tightened, and she felt a freakish surge of heat flood through her body. As a bolt of terror raced up her spine, she stumbled backward – right into a pair of hands that broke her fall.

"TED!" she yelled, half in fear and half in relief.

"Who'd you expect? I live here too – remember?" he said sarcastically. "Now get off my foot. You're not exactly weightless, you know."

Brenda moved her foot and scowled at her brother. "Look," she shot back. "It's not my fault we had to move. So don't take it out on me."

"Of course not," her brother said with a smirk. "Mustn't upset the family favourite. I suppose you've already picked out the biggest bedroom for yourself, right?"

Brenda glanced into the blue room. Something about it gave her the creeps, and she didn't even want to step across the threshold. "No. I'd rather have the room right at the top of the stairs. You can have this one if you want. It's the biggest besides Mum and Dad's."

Ted narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing," Brenda lied. "I just like the other one better." She tried to cover up her anxiety by changing the subject. "Come on, let's go and see the back garden."



By the time she got ready for bed that night, Brenda was exhausted. For hours the entire family had moved furniture around and distributed boxes to the proper rooms. Even Tina had dragged her small box of toys clumsily up the stairs... thump... thump... thump.

Too busy to think of anything but where to put her things, Brenda hadn't thought about the room at the end of the hall the entire day. But now in the quiet of her new room, she remembered how creepy it had been. In fact, just thinking about it made her stomach feel a little queasy, and she tried to calm herself by listening to the sound of the owl outside in the tall trees.



Then she heard another sound. It was very soft, so Brenda had to strain her ears to figure out what it was. Finally, she realised that someone was crying in the room at the end of the hall.

"Ted?" Brenda sat up and listened again. Yes, the crying was definitely coming from her brother's room. Quietly, she climbed out of bed. She tiptoed down the hall and stood in front of Ted's closed door, carefully putting her ear up against it.

The sound was much fainter now, as if it were coming from somewhere else. She was

about to call out to Ted to see if she could make him feel any better – she was his older sister, after all, and it was her duty – and then she remembered his “weightless” crack earlier in the day.

“He’ll be OK tomorrow,” she thought, yawning, as she walked back to her room.

Then just before she drifted off to sleep, she noticed the crying had stopped.

Morning, dear,” her mother said, as Brenda entered the kitchen the next morning. “There’s freshly-squeezed orange juice in the fridge. Would you mind pouring some for everyone and putting it on the table?”

“Fine,” Brenda answered, as she took five glasses from the cupboard and started to put one at each place. Then she stopped and stared at the table.

“Mum, who isn’t eating breakfast with us?” she asked.

“What do you mean, dear?” her mum replied, while buttering the toast.

“There are only four places,” Brenda pointed out.

Her father walked into the kitchen carrying a giggling Tina.

“Of course there are only four places,” he said with a smile. “Why? Were you expecting company?”

Brenda frowned. “What about Ted?”

“Ted who?” her dad said, as he put Tina in her chair and then sat down himself.

Brenda looked at both of her parents, and then began to laugh. “OK, what’s the joke? I’ll admit that sometimes I wish we could send Ted to the moon, but we’re stuck with him.”

Brenda’s mum and dad gave each other a quizzical look.

“Come on, you two,” Brenda felt her smile fade. “This isn’t funny any more. I’m talking about Ted – my brother? The weird kid in the room at the end of the hall?”

Her mum shook her head. “Brenda,” she said slowly. “You’re right. This isn’t funny. We don’t have a son named Ted. We don’t have a son at all. And the room at the end of the hall is Tina’s. It has been for months, ever since we moved here.”

For a moment everyone sat in complete silence. Brenda tried to make some sort of sense out of what her parents were saying. Then, about to burst into tears, she raced from the kitchen. As Brenda reached the stairs, she saw that there were no longer any boxes in the living room. Everything was neatly in its place as if it had been that way for some time.

At the top of the stairs she stopped. Her head was spinning. She lurched to the end of the hall and opened the door to the room. Inside she saw Tina’s small bed with a sky blue quilt on it. At the windows were ruffled blue curtains, and a shelf on the opposite wall was lined with dolls and stuffed animals. Her parents were right; this was definitely Tina’s room.

“But how can this be?” she whispered, noticing that there was something else, too: a faint smell of charred wood and ash.

“You see?” Brenda’s dad said softly, as he walked up behind her.

Brenda didn’t even try to wipe away the tears that were running down her cheeks. “This is crazy,” she moaned. “I don’t understand what’s happening.”



Her father smiled and gently turned her face toward his. “It isn’t crazy, honey,” he said. “You’re obviously upset about something.” He paused, then wiped a tear from her eye. “I tell you what. Maybe you’re just tired. You’ve been working very hard at school. Why not take the day off and stay in bed?”

Brenda didn’t answer. And she didn’t resist as her father guided her back to her room. She suddenly felt extremely tired. “It’s just a dream,” she thought, as he tucked her into bed. “I’ll wake up soon and everything will be back to normal.”

It was early in the afternoon when Brenda awoke. She slipped out of bed, tiptoed to the room at the end of the hall and peered inside. Everything was as it had been that morning. Next she slipped into her parents’ room. Against one wall stood a large oak chest of drawers. On top of the chest was a handmade lace runner, three glass perfume bottles, some loose change and a collection of family photographs in pretty frames. She looked at one photo after another and saw the smiling faces of her mum, dad, Tina and herself. But there were no photos of Ted.

Returning to her own room, she dressed quickly and hurried downstairs. When she opened the kitchen door, it was remarkably cold outside for summer, but then she remembered that if several months had really gone by it could be autumn or even winter. She grabbed her jacket from a hook and slipped out.

Running to the garage, Brenda looked inside. Well, at least her dad’s car was there, along with her bicycle and Tina’s old tricycle. Surely Ted’s bike would be there

too... or his skateboard... or something to prove that he had ever existed. But there was nothing.

“What is happening?” she groaned. “Have I lost my mind?”



That night at dinner, Brenda told her mum and dad that she felt much better, then chose to be silent. It wouldn’t help to have them thinking that she was nuts, so keeping quiet until she figured things out seemed like the answer.

Tina chattered about her busy day at pre-school, and her mum talked about the new project she was planning at the university. Every once in a while, Brenda noticed her parents glance at her and then look worriedly at each other. Trying to appear normal, Brenda helped with the dishes after supper. Then claiming to be tired, she asked to be excused.

As she trudged up the stairs, Brenda noticed that she actually was exhausted. In fact, she had a little trouble breathing, and what she did take into her lungs had a burnt scent. She looked round for signs of smoke, but there were none.

Trying to shrug everything off as just her imagination, she climbed wearily into bed and drifted off into a light, troubled sleep. A few hours later, after a lot of tossing and turning, Brenda opened her eyes. Once again she heard someone crying softly down the hall. She looked at the glowing numbers on her digital clock. The time was 12:03.

"Tina?" she whispered, sitting up as she heard the cries growing slightly louder.

It sounded as if her little sister was sobbing... just like Ted had done. A shudder ran through her and she leapt out of bed.

Quickly running down the hall, she threw open what was now her sister's door. The smell of smoke and soot stung her nostrils, and she recoiled in terror.

"TINA!" she screamed. But somehow she couldn't force herself to cross the threshold into the darkened room. Deep inside she knew she had to – her little sister was in danger – but instead she reeled back against the wall, helpless.

Suddenly the light in the room snapped on, and both her parents were beside her.

"Brenda!" her mum cried, trying to hold her as Brenda squirmed away. "What's wrong, love?"

"It's Tina!" Brenda screamed. "You've got to help her. Didn't you hear her? She needs our help!"

Her father gripped her by the shoulders. "Brenda! Calm down! What are you talking about? Who is Tina?"

Brenda stopped. Her mouth dropped open and she stared at her parents as if they were total strangers.

"My sister," she finally whimpered. "My sister, Tina. Don't you remember? Don't you care? What's wrong with you? It's just like what happened to Ted. He disappeared from that room," she sobbed, pointing over the threshold into the awful place, "... and you act like he never existed. Well, he was my brother. And Tina was my sister. And..." But Brenda couldn't go on. She broke into hysterical tears and let her father rock her gently in his arms.

"Brenda, sweetheart," her mother whispered. She was crying too. "You don't have

a brother or a sister. You are an only child and always have been. This is our room. It has been ever since we moved here."

Brenda twisted away, turned toward the open door, and caught her breath. Inside the room she could see her parents' bed and the big oak chest of drawers. From where she was, Brenda could see the photographs in their pretty frames, photos of herself with her mum and dad... and no one else.



The sound of a car pulling up in the driveway woke Brenda. She got up and walked groggily to the window. There was an old van in the driveway. For a moment she stood looking out, thinking that there was something she should know, but she couldn't quite remember. Turning from the window, she heard the front door open downstairs.

"Mum?" she called softly. "Is that you?"

But there was no answer.

Thinking that her mother hadn't heard her, she started to go downstairs when she felt a stab of fear. The voices downstairs were those of strangers! "Where are my parents?" she thought, her mind racing. "Did they decide I was crazy and have they called these people to come and get me?"

The door to the room at the end of the hall was closed. Cautiously, Brenda eased herself to the head of the stairs and leaned over to see who was there. Two men were standing just inside the front door.

"As you can see," the taller of the two said, "the fire didn't do much damage to

the lower floor. The upper floor got the worst of it, and it was the smoke that got the family. Nice people, too," he added, shaking his head sadly. "They hadn't lived here long. Came from Manchester."

Brenda felt her heart pounding. She glanced down at the railing under her shaking fingers and for the first time saw that it was charred and disintegrating. The wall behind her was scorched and a smell of burnt wood hung in the air.

"Anybody know how the fire started, Luke?" asked the smaller man.

"It started in the big room at the end of the upstairs passage," Luke replied. "You'll see for yourself. Nothing's been touched since it happened about five years ago."

"Why hasn't anyone cleaned up the place?" asked the smaller man.

"Oh, superstition," said Luke. "Anybody who's been here has claimed to have heard crying coming from that room. Some say the place is haunted. My wife thinks so, too. She says that when people die suddenly like that, sometimes the spirits can't accept what has happened. They stay on until something makes them realise that they're really dead."

It was as if a weight had been lifted from her. Suddenly aware of

all she needed to know, Brenda turned to look at the room at the end of the hall. The door was standing open. Slowly she walked towards it.

Ted had been the first to accept it... then little Tina... and finally her parents. Now it was her turn to stop fighting the truth and accept that she had died and become a spirit. Brenda stepped across the threshold and stood in the centre of the room, sad but no longer afraid. Then she took one last look at the faded blue, flame-scarred walls and began to weep softly. She raised her hands to wipe the tears from her face and watched her flesh fade into thin air.

"Did you hear that?" said Luke.

"I heard someone crying."

His friend listened, then shook his head. "Nope," he said, "it's dead quiet."

THE END



OUR HAUNTED WORLD



THE BUSH 'PANTHER'

Hundreds of Australians have been petrified by encounters with large, dangerous, cat-like carnivores! Found in remote, mountainous places, the panther-like beast is said to be 2.3m long with smooth black hair, strong legs and big paws. It has pricked-up ears, yellow eyes and long flesh-tearing teeth! The beast's prey – cattle and other animals – always has fang-holes at the back of the neck. Loud howls and shrieks have been heard, and huge pawmarks found near the ripped-up remains.

Scientists say that the pawmarks belong to no known species. Evidence of large cats has never been found in Australia. The creatures have been spotted carrying their young in a pouch, so they could be an unknown, meat-eating marsupial!

In the south-east Australian bush, weird things are said to be going on above, on – and even *under* the ground!



Thylacines Seen

When the last thylacine died in a zoo in 1934, they were thought to be extinct. But people claim to have seen them in Tasmania and the Blue Mountains. This doglike creature has been called 'the most common extinct animal on Earth'!

RUMBLES IN THE ROCKS

In the Jamieson Valley, west of Sydney, UFOs are frequently reported. In this remote, densely forested region of the Blue Mountains, soldiers and lone campers have vanished. Ten-metre circular burn-marks have been found where huge trees have been totally flattened after a UFO sighting.

Strange lights, like those of a town lit up at night, have also been seen. The phantom city lights always seem to vanish before daybreak. Many campers in the area have been kept awake by a loud, throbbing sound coming from the earth beneath them. These sounds were loud enough to make the ground shake!

Reports of UFOs disappearing into the depths of the valley, or appearing out of the ground have made some people think there might be a UFO base under the mountains!



▲ SILENT SISTERS

If there's something strange going on in the Blue Mountains, the 'Three Sisters' (as these rocks are known) are not saying!

GLOWING GHOST

When Michael Cooke and his family moved into their new home in New South Wales, they sensed that someone else was in residence!

Beds were rumpled, toys were mysteriously moved round and doorknobs were rattled

loudly. Their tiny baby suddenly sat bolt upright as if it had been grabbed by unseen hands.

Then, one night, Michael was outside the house when he saw a terrifying, ghostly glowing face peering from one of the windows. Its eyes were white with green centres. Michael and his family moved out straight away – their dream home had turned into a total nightmare!



THE HOOK

A friend of a friend living in Sydney decided to take his girlfriend, Marlene, out on a date.

1 It was a winter's night and Darren and Marlene had been to see a drive-in movie on the outskirts of Sydney.

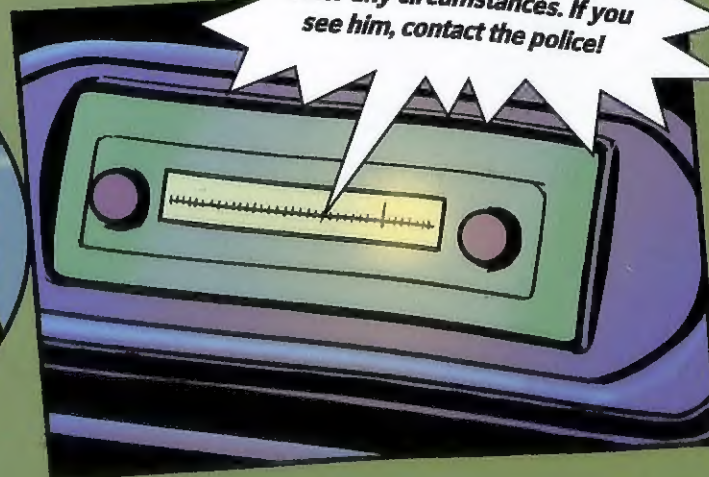


2 When the movie finished, Darren and Marlene decided to drive to a quiet, wooded place overlooking the city. They turned on the car radio to listen to their favourite local music station.

3 "Mmmm..." sighed Darren. "What a great night! Terrific girlfriend, brilliant movie, and now - my favourite music!"



4 The music suddenly stopped and the DJ said...

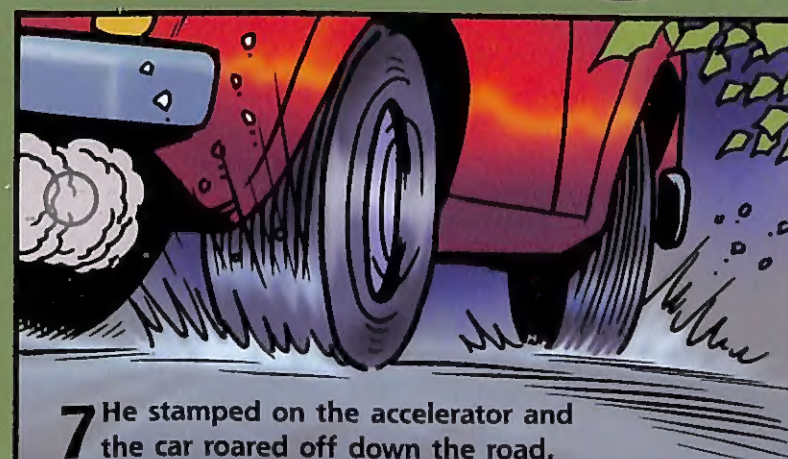


An extremely dangerous, criminally insane psychopath has escaped from Sydney prison! He's easily recognisable because he has a metal hook instead of one hand. Do not approach this man under any circumstances. If you see him, contact the police!

5 The music started up again but the colour had drained from Marlene's face. "Oh, no! D-d-did you hear that, Darren?" she shivered. "The prison is only a mile or so up the road... which means that madman could be right here! C'mon, let's get out of here, fast!"



6 "Hah! So much for a quiet, romantic end to the evening!" sighed Darren, snapping on the ignition and swiping a clear patch in the steamed-up windscreen.



7 He stamped on the accelerator and the car roared off down the road, wheels screaming. "I'll take you straight home," said Darren, annoyed at the early break-up of their evening out.



8 When they reached Marlene's home, Darren pulled into the kerb and parked. Then, wanting to impress his girlfriend, he walked round to open Marlene's door and help her from the car.



9 As he reached for the handle, Darren let out a horrified scream. There, wedged under the handle with part of a bloodied sleeve still attached, was a shiny metal hook, glinting in the light of the streetlamp!



BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Special Investigation File: 45
The disappearance of planes and ships in the area of the Bermuda Triangle.
SpineChiller creates a file



The Weird Case of Flight 19

Dec 5 1945
When a squadron of five US Navy Avenger Torpedo bombers vanished 'as if through a hole in the sky', a Martin Mariner flying boat with a crew of 13 was sent to find them. When this big rescue craft also disappeared, the biggest-ever ground-sea search was mounted. No clues were ever found as to what happened in the Bermuda Triangle area.
'Last Contact' Clues
Flight 19's leader had reported that they could see no land, were off-course and lost. When told by the airbase control tower to fly west, the leader said, "We don't know which way is west. Everything is wrong... strange. We can't be sure of any direction..."
Airbase radio contact with Flight 19 then broke down, but the pilots could be heard, saying that their gyros and compasses were 'going crazy', and giving different readings. All contact was then lost - forever! Last messages from other craft lost in the area are similar, reporting 'white water', a 'green haze', 'instruments going haywire', followed by loss of radio contact.

Ref. 1145
US Navy Avenger Torpedo bomber squadron



Ref. 2145
Martin Mariner flying boat



WHERE AND WHAT IS THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE?

This area of the Atlantic Ocean lies between the southern tip of Florida and the islands of Puerto Rico and Bermuda. It is the focus of one of the world's greatest mysteries. For centuries, large and small ships have disappeared without trace in these waters. In some cases, just the crews have vanished.

In 1945, when the Bermuda Triangle began to claim planes as well as ships, the baffling news story sped round the world! Since then, over 100 ships and planes have vanished, with more than 1000 people 'missing, presumed dead'. No wreckage, life-rafts, oil slicks or bodies have ever been found.

WAS THERE A COVER-UP?

In 1974, twenty-nine years after Flight 19's famous disappearance, a report on American TV claimed that newly released government papers included a record of the leader of Flight 19's last words to his pilots. These had been: "Don't come after me." But local radio buffs claim that he'd in fact gone on to add, "They look like they're from outer space!" Such sensitive information, if true, is not likely to be officially made public!

Ref. 3145
Lost in 1963:
Marine Sulphur
Queen tanker



CLASSIFIED

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS:

- A high number of UFOs have been reported, both above and under the sea. Many people think that UFOs are somehow linked to the mystery disappearance of ships and planes.
- New research shows that changes in electromagnetic forces (caused by UFOs or as yet unknown, natural forces) might cause certain things to 'disappear' into another dimension or timewarp.
- The legendary crystal-powered power station of the lost civilization of Atlantis, could still be working! If so, it could affect the instruments of planes and ships which are then lost - or perhaps shifted into another dimension - beyond all contact.
- No wreckage, bodies or oil slicks have ever been found, even when the missing ships or planes vanished near to land or in very shallow sea.



Ref. 4145
Poster offering
reward for finding
missing yacht

FLIGHT 19 BOARD OF INQUIRY - REPORT EXTRACTS:

THEY VANISHED AS COMPLETELY AS IF THEY HAD GONE TO MARS.

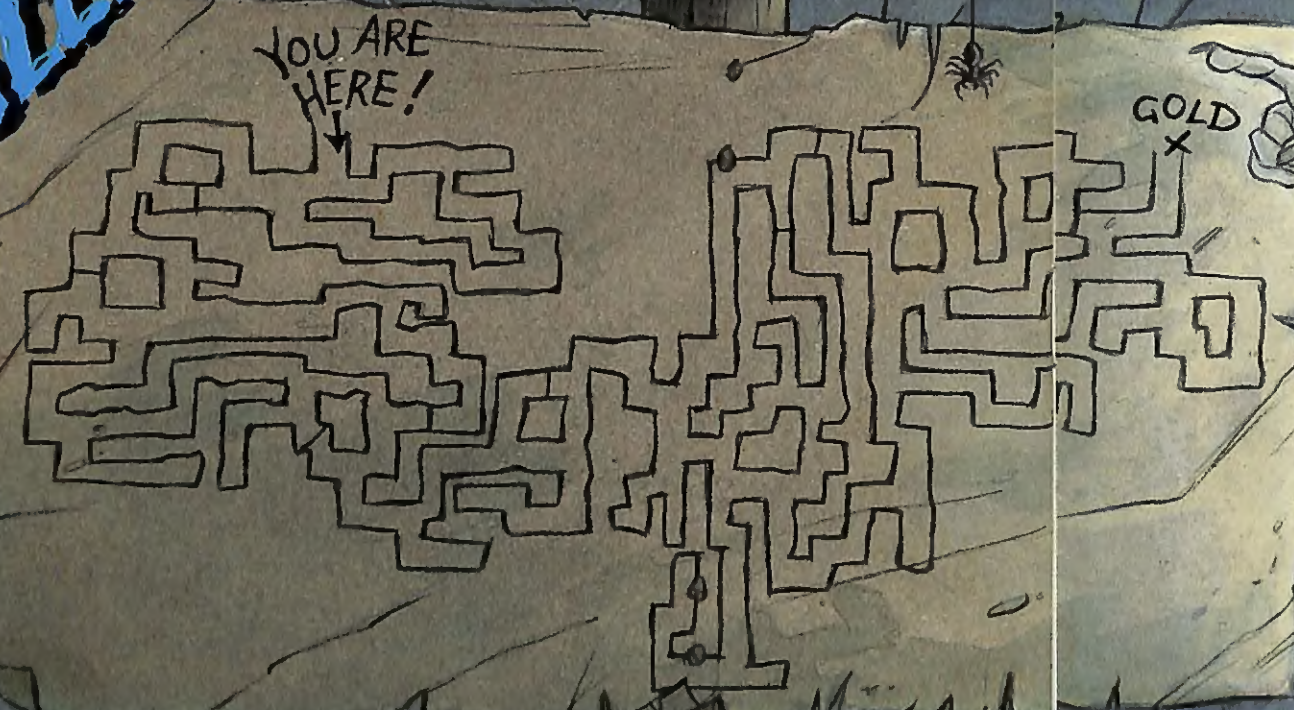
MEMBERS... WERE NOT ABLE TO MAKE EVEN A GOOD GUESS AS TO WHAT HAPPENED.

THIS... LOSS SEEMS TO BE A TOTAL MYSTERY, THE STRANGEST EVER INVESTIGATED IN... NAVAL AVIATION.

HAUNTED MINE PUZZLES

GOLDEN MAZE

Can you find
your way to the
gold seam?



HIDDEN MEANINGS

The following phrases describe
books that include someone or something
that lives or works underground.

- 1 Pale creature meets seven
rather small people.
- 2 Breeze in the trees.
- 3 Long-haired girl in fantasy country.
- 4 Creatures who live in a wood
worth a small old coin.
- 5 A wet boat sinks.
- 6 A collection of lunar ships.

Freaky Facts

Seven skeletons, found in
a burial ground near Clearwater,
Minnesota, in 1988, had
double rows of teeth in both
upper and lower jaws! Their
upper and lower jaws! Their
foreheads were low and
sloping with a jutting-out brow.
No one knows what species of
man they were.

TOAD IN THE HOLE

A toad fell into a pit which was
15 metres deep. Every day he managed to
leap 3 metres, but slipped back 2 metres.
How long did it take him to get out
of the pit?

I know
where the gold is,
but how do I get there?

Funny facts

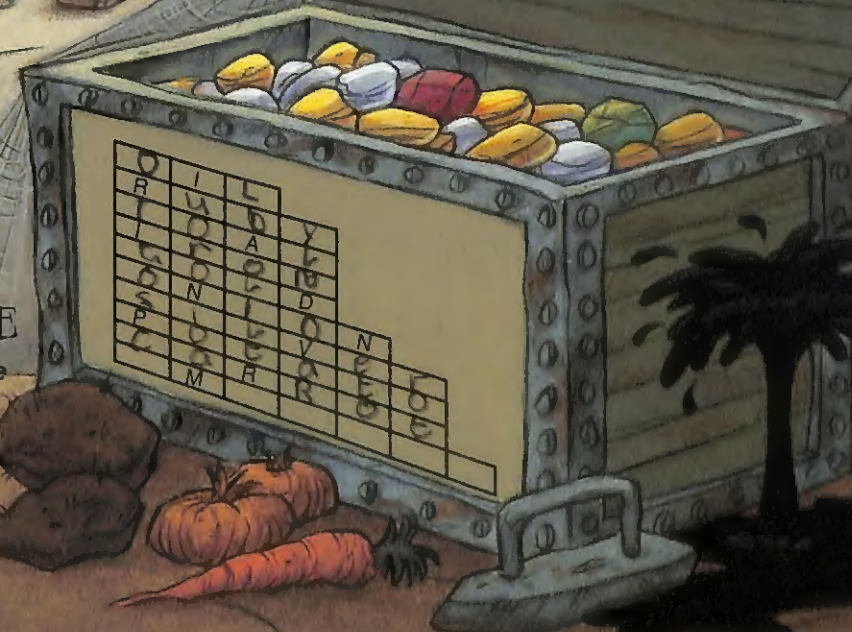
A man was shot while
robbing a store in Sheldon,
Vermont, USA, on 13th
October 1905. After he
was buried, a gravestone
was erected with the
message:

R.I.P.
HERE LIES
A BURGLAR
THIS STONE WAS
BOUGHT WITH THE
MONEY FOUND
ON HIM.

BURIED TREASURE

All the things in and around the
chest are found underground.

Can you fit their names
into the grid on the chest?
(Some letters have been
put in to help you.)



UNDERGROUND CROSSWORD

A gold mine can go deep underground. Here is a crossword where all the clues have something to do with things underground. Read the clues and fill in the grid.

ACROSS

- 2 Large underground cave
- 4 Tunnel under town for carrying waste
- 8 Small tunneling animal
- 9 Hot water fountain
- 11 Deep hole to bring black liquid fuel to surface
- 12 Group of rabbit homes
- 13 Solid black fuel

DOWN

- 1 Home for a fox
- 3 What archaeologists do to discover underground remains
- 4 Where water comes out of the earth
- 5 The sport of exploring underground caves
- 6 Underground passage
- 7 Paris underground railway
- 10 Underground layers of rock

Freaky Facts

Some plant seeds were found buried in frozen silt in the Yukon in 1954. When they were thawed out and put in soil, they started to grow. Scientists calculated that they were 15,000 years old!

Fab Facts

The smallest underpass in the world is only one foot wide and goes under the M5 motorway, near Exeter. It was built for badgers!

A SECRET MESSAGE

Here is a message written in code. Can you decipher it? Work out the code first. It starts with A=2, and goes up in twos, so that B=4 and C=6. Once you have worked out the whole alphabet, you will be able to read the secret message!

ANSWERS

HIDDEN MEANINGS: 1 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs 2 Wind in the Willows 3 Alice in Wonderland 4 The Animals of Farming Wood 5 Watership Down 6 Moonlight 7 The Holes 8 The Last Day He Kept 3 metres and was out 9 The things are: oil, ruby, coal, iron, gold, silver, potato, carrot, emerald. **UNDERGROUND CROSSWORD:** Across: 2 cavern, 4 sewer, 8 mole, 9 geyser, 11 oilwell, 12 warren, 13 coal. Down: 1 den, 3 excavate, 4 spring, 5 potholing, 6 tunnel, 7 metro, 10 strata. **A SECRET MESSAGE:** Beware all who enter here - this gold mine is haunted!

CLASSIC



SERIAL

Chapter 2

The Phantom of the Opera

Retold from the story by Gaston Leroux

Despite her triumph, the singer Christine Daae did not appear at the opera house in the next few weeks. Count Raoul sent messages to her lodgings, but there was no reply. Then one morning she sent him a note. "I have not forgotten our happy childhood together," she wrote to him. "I am travelling to Brittany today to lay some flowers on my father's grave."

The count threw some clothes into a bag and consulted the railway timetable. There was just time to catch the afternoon train. He travelled in a state of great excitement. Christine must want him to follow her. Why else would she have written that note? He went over in his mind the little he knew of her background. Her father had been a Swedish violinist, travelling round Europe playing Scandinavian folk melodies while Christine sang to his music. Every summer they went to Brittany. It was there as a young boy that Count Raoul had first met Christine and heard the wonderful tales her father told. The ones about the Angel of Music had particularly caught his fancy. This Muse was said to visit every great musician and Christine's father had told Raoul that his daughter must have been visited in her cradle.

"The Angel is never seen, but he is heard, whispering in the ear of those who are meant to hear him," said the old fiddler. "I will send him to you when I die and go to heaven," he told his daughter.

Three years later, Raoul met Christine and her father in Brittany again. They spent many happy days together and when he left, Raoul promised Christine that he would never forget her. Years later, when Raoul saw Christine singing at the opera, he fell in love with her all over again.



Underlined words are explained in WORD POWER.



The villagers must have dug up the ancient graves to make room in the graveyard for the recently dead.

That night Raoul was woken by a sound outside his window. Looking out, he saw Christine leaving the inn.

Putting on a cloak, he followed her as she made her way to the church. He saw her kneel down by the heap of whitened skulls and bones piled against the wall. As he drew closer, Raoul could hear heavenly music.

"Someone is skulking behind the bones," he thought, but as he came closer, the skulls started to move. Raoul froze to the spot as one by one they started to roll down the slope towards him. More and more bones fell and, as they did so, a shadow in a cloak slipped past the young man. Raoul grabbed at the cloak and the figure stopped. A terrible death's head with scorching eyes stared at him, turning his soul to ice, and he fainted. When he came to, Raoul found himself in his room at the inn. He discovered that Christine had left without a word.

Two weeks after he had returned to Paris, Raoul received another note from Christine. It read: "Go to the masked ball at the opera tomorrow night. Wear a white cloak and mask to disguise yourself and stand by the door leading to the great hall. Do not tell anyone where you are going."

Raoul arrived at the village and went with Christine to the churchyard to visit her father's grave.

As she placed some red roses on the grave, she asked, "Do you remember the legend of the Angel of Music? Well, I have been visited by the Angel – he comes to my dressing room and gives me lessons. It was he whom you heard talking to me that evening."

The young man laughed in disbelief and Christine took offence.

"It's true!" she cried. Then she turned and ran back to the inn where they were staying. Before he left the graveyard, Raoul noticed a macabre pile of skulls and bones lying by the wall of the church.

The ball was a popular, noisy affair. As Raoul waited by the door, a figure in black passed him and squeezed the tips of his fingers. It was Christine. As he followed her through the crush, Raoul spotted a guest dressed all in red. His disguise was so gruesome, it was causing a sensation. Everyone had turned round to look at him. As Raoul passed him, Red Death turned

and Raoul gasped – it was the death's head from the graveyard in Brittany! With no time to think, and fearful of losing Christine's black-robed figure, Raoul pressed on through the crowds and up two staircases. Finally Christine stopped at a door and slipped through. Raoul followed.

"Keep in the shadows," whispered Christine, putting her ear to the door. She re-opened the door a crack and Raoul, glancing through the opening, glimpsed the frightening costume of Red Death turning into the corridor just as Christine slammed the door.

"You must stop loving me," Christine whispered. "I wanted to tell you that I may never sing again at the opera and you must forget me." As she spoke, Raoul studied Christine's face and was overwhelmed by the harrowing change in her. She looked deathly pale with dark shadows under her eyes and her lips seemed bloodless. Before Raoul had time to speak she gave a gesture of farewell and slipped away.

WORD POWER

Scandinavian – from Scandinavia, the peninsula divided into Norway and Sweden

Brittany – the name of a region in north-west France

Muse – a spirit that inspires great musicians, poets and artists

macabre – gruesome, morbid, grisly, frightening

skulking – lurking or lying in wait for something

harrowing – very distressing or disturbing, heart-rending



When Raoul returned to the party, he asked if anyone had seen Red Death. Everyone had seen the figure, but no one knew where he had gone. Raoul wandered the empty corridors of the opera house in search of the mystery guest and eventually found himself outside Christine's dressing room. On an impulse he went inside, but the gas-lit room was empty. Hearing footsteps outside, Raoul slipped behind a curtain just as Christine entered, looking weary and sad. She sat at her dressing table with her head in her hands and, a few moments later, the sound of singing could be heard, very soft and faint, through the walls of the dressing room. The song became louder until it seemed as if it was in the very room.

Christine rose. "Here I am," she said, a smile of happiness appearing on her pale face. The voice without a body went on singing and Raoul had never heard anything so glorious and triumphant. As the final words, "Fate links thee to me for ever and a day..." faded away, Christine walked towards her reflection in the full-length mirror. Raoul stretched out to catch her in his arms, but an icy blast flung him backwards and, for a moment, he saw two, four, eight images of Christine spinning before him. When everything stopped moving, he found himself in front of the mirror, staring at his own reflection – but Christine had totally disappeared!

Chapter 3: Christine is in danger

THE FACTS

Gaston Leroux (1868-1927) was a French writer whose zest for life and passion for writing and travel kept him in the public eye. As a journalist, he wrote for newspapers about the trials of the day. Later, he covered the early days of the Russian Revolution. He loved to explore the more remote parts of Africa or Scandinavia, and was happy to disguise himself, if he needed to. His daring sense of adventure was always getting him in – and out – of trouble. This exciting life inspired Leroux to write some brilliant popular novels, and his detective stories rivalled those about Sherlock Holmes. *The Phantom of the Opera* is his most famous novel.



ALIENS

Is anyone out there in space? We long to know the answer, but there is no concrete evidence that aliens exist – only experiences that other people have reported. These cannot be proved conclusively.

If aliens do visit us on Earth, where do they come from? Are they extra-terrestrials from another planet? Or are they from a dimension beyond space-time?

Aliens don't have to look human. Where they come from would affect the way they looked. They could be as small as bacteria, or as tall as a skyscraper, look like a reptile, a flying insect – or a distorted version of us! Perhaps they constantly change shape or wear masks. What is interesting is that the same types of aliens have been sighted by people throughout the world.



▲ **MAN FROM MARS**
This drawing of a Martian in 1939 shows him with huge lungs and a light body to cope with the thin air on Mars and suction pads on his feet because of weak gravity.

A GUIDE TO ALIENS

If you ever spot an alien, this list of the most commonly described ones should help you identify it.

The Greys These are the creatures that everyone imagines when the word 'alien' is mentioned. They are quite small – about half the size of a man – and have large domed heads and huge eyes which dominate the face. Their heads are out of proportion to their bodies, which are often thin and spindly. Most of the people who report aliens, describe Greys as rather cold creatures that communicate through telepathy. They seem to be interested in conducting experiments on humans – but why they should do so is anybody's guess.

▲ **GREAT GREYS**
These Greys kidnap a child in the film 'Close Encounters...'. Since the film was released, 95% of reported kidnappings by aliens feature Greys. Is this a coincidence...?



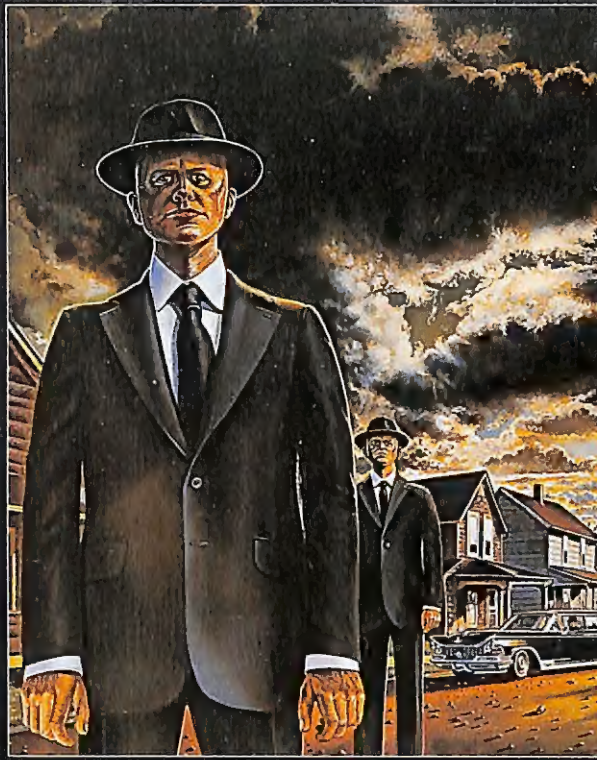
▲ **MODERN MARTIAN**
This man from Mars is an update on the one from 1939 (see top right). He features in the recent film 'Mars Attacks'.



The Nordics These aliens look like handsome blonde Scandinavians. They are taller – about 2 metres – and their eyes can be catlike. Nordics are supposed to be charming and people feel safe with them. Their mission seems to be to spread peace across the universe.

Men in Black These are humanoids that look like FBI agents. They are always dressed in black and have a very sinister appearance. Their purpose seems to be to stop anyone who has seen a UFO from mentioning it again. Are they agents of the US government...?

Giants These creatures are hugely tall, over 3 metres, dressed in silver suits and copper boots. They have 3 eyes, two white and one red in the centre. These Giants have mainly been spotted in Russia, taking notes about the Earth.



▲ **IN DISGUISE?** Men in Black look human – but are they aliens in disguise or government officials pretending to be aliens?

with human intelligence that walk on two legs. Lizard men are often very tall and have green or silver scaly skin and red eyes. Some have webbed hands, but others have three fingers with black claws. They appear to be extremely vicious and frightening.

Could they be extra-terrestrial travel writers... ?

Goblins These are little people with large bald heads and small bodies.

The head sports two antennae and a pair of enormous ears. The mouth is wide, the chin pointed and the eyes round and glowing. Their arms are long with large hands and their legs short. Goblins often float rather than walk and seem friendly, if a little mischievous. They are called after the goblins in fairy tales.

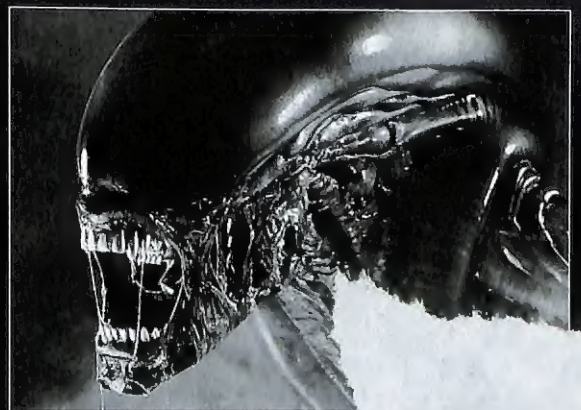
Lizard Men These creatures, also called Sauronithoids, are reptiles



▲ **FAIRY TALES** Are there stories about goblins because people saw them – or are they just a figment of the imagination?



▲ **A BEASTLY BEAST** This alien creature is a type of Lizard man, popular in films of the 1960s.



▲ **FAMOUS FILMS** The best-known alien to be found in recent films is 'The Alien' – a hideous, insect-like creature that terrorises other beings and seems to be indestructible.

